

The News

KUGATTA



THE INJUSTICE HIDDEN IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION: WHEN LOVE IS EXPLOITED

from Jessica Davis

There is a lack of balance in this world that is often very difficult to process. It breaks my heart and often my spirit to encounter such suffering and loss due to the exploitation of the vulnerable. People with feelings that rarely get acknowledged and wrongs perpetuated against them that almost never get righted. I started Kugatta alongside my colleague Gladys in an effort to address many of these issues. Mr. O never understood what adoption meant and out of an overwhelming need for support and love for his niece, Stella, he agreed to let her study in America, never to be seen or heard from again. The entire family mourns this loss daily. They call us often to see if we have found her. We love Mr O so much. You could not find a kinder and more loving human being if you tried. The lack of transparency and concern for this family's loss reveals the profound injustice and imbalance of power that exist within the intercountry adoption system. The vulnerable are exploited in their time of need, families ripped apart, children taken and misled to believe they were abandoned, unwanted, or orphaned, with absolutely no power or pathway to correct these injustices when they come to light. The desperation in Mr. O's voice to hear any news of his niece is always deafening. Kugatta has come alongside Mr O and his family in an effort to empower them and help them search for their niece and sister, Alowo Stellah. We met Mr O and his family many years ago and care about them deeply. When we first met him, they were not in the best place, but over the years they have grown stronger and empowered in both their livelihood and with their voices. Pillars of the community that are working to ensure no other family loses their loved one in this way. Speaking out so that others understand the misconceptions and dangers that come from accepting help that requires one to separate from a child they love.



**current
needs**

therapy session fees covered for Ugandan families that have been victims of illicit separation from their child through the intercountry adoption system

land for a mother on our program

school fees covered for a child

Transportation fees covered for the work we do in Uganda

Thank you for considering a donation to Kugatta. Any amount donated will help us to meet the needs of the vulnerable families we seek to empower.

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Kugatta is currently assisting twenty students and their families with school fees. As part of our commitment to empowering these vulnerable families, we prioritize parental involvement in every aspect of their child's education. Parents actively participate in choosing the school, providing the necessary school supplies, and attending all school meetings and visitation days.



BIRTH MOTHERS SPEAK AT UNITED NATIONS: from Jessica Davis

In September 2023, three birth mothers and one sister from our program were given the opportunity to share their heartbreaking stories of loss through intercountry adoption at a United Nations meeting in Geneva. It was a powerful moment as these women courageously spoke out, exposing the injustices they faced at the hands of a system that took advantage of them in their most vulnerable moments.

Mama C shared how it has been 12 years since she last saw her daughter. She was told her child was going to America for an education, but would return to take care of her. After years of pleading for information from the organization that took her daughter, Mama C reached out to Kugatta for help. We explained what adoption truly means and why her child had not come back. She was devastated by the truth, and to this day, the adoptive family has refused to allow any meaningful contact with her child, leaving Mama C with an unfulfilled longing for the connection she so desperately desires.

The second mother, Mama S, shared how during a very difficult time she was approached by a local organization that offered her help. She believed her child was going to America for an education temporarily, but she was lied to. Knowing she could not read or write, they tricked her into signing away her parental rights with a thumb print. The interpreter involved was also corrupt. Her child was adopted and to be taken to America forever. When the adoptive family learned of the corruption behind their adoption they made the unprecedented decision to reunite the child back home with her family. Mama S shared how all of her children now go to school together in Uganda and that they are thriving.

Mama H shared the tragic story of how she was lied to and her child taken to America. She shared how she was asked to sign documents she could not read and they provided interpreters that were not honest with her. Her testimony was powerful in that it not only conveyed the devastation and heartbreak separating a child from their mother can cause, it also was a testament to just how corrupt the intercountry adoption system is. She pleaded with other Ugandan families not to make the same mistake she did. She advised Ugandans to never sign anything or to ever allow anyone to take their child. She asked Americans that want to help vulnerable Ugandan children to help in ways that do not require a mother to separate from her child. Her statements were powerful and her pleas came from a place of deep suffering and loss.

A Ugandan sister shared how she misses her sister and wishes to see her and be with her. She shared how her mother was lied to and her sister taken to America for adoption. Meanwhile, this mother has all of her other children in her care and clearly did not need the kind of "help" the intercountry adoption system gave her.

The intercountry adoption system as it is now is broken. Offering only one option to a desperate mother during a difficult time is exploitive and causes more harm than helps, even more so when the parent doesn't even understand what adoption actually means. Separating families shouldn't be done with such a lack of responsibility and disregard for the child's inalienable right to be with the family they were born into. None of the Ugandan families that shared testimony needed to be separated from their child. Their vulnerable circumstances and love for their child was exploited and used to illicitly strip them of their parental rights forever. Currently, there are no regulations in place to prevent the human trafficking of children through intercountry adoption because there have been no standards put into place to regulate such gross miscarriages of justice. Furthermore, there are no avenues in place for families and children that were needlessly separated in the past to seek justice. At Kugatta, we are dedicated to preventing family separation, exposing corruption within the intercountry adoption system, supporting vulnerable families and children affected by these illicit practices, and providing a platform for their voices to be heard in the fight against these grave injustices.

Mama H

Here's an update from one of the mothers in our program, Mama H: For many years, I searched desperately for my son. Last year, my prayers were answered when I was able to reconnect with his adoptive mother. Since then, I have been receiving updates about him and learning how he is doing. When I reconnected with his adoptive mother, I shared how deeply I love my son and how much I have missed him all these years. I also explained the circumstances that forced me to give him up for adoption. She has been kind enough to send me updated pictures of M, and I feel such joy seeing the young man he has grown into, a handsome and thriving young man. It warms my heart and gives me hope. I continue to pray that one day the family will be able to visit Uganda so that I can finally see my son once again in-person.

